



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Baltimore Pharmacist Charged with Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and Felony Theft**

**BALTIMORE, MD (April 27, 2018)** - Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that Susan Iwunze Nwoga, 47, a pharmacist practicing in Baltimore was charged by the Baltimore City grand jury with conspiracy to defraud a State Health Plan-Medicaid, defrauding a State Health Plan, felony theft and more than 300 counts of distribution of a controlled dangerous substance. Co-conspirator, Darnella Carter, is charged with conspiracy to defraud a State Health Plan, defrauding a State Health Plan and obtaining a benefit by fraud.

Nwoga owns and operates Poplar Grove Pharmacy, an independent, retail pharmacy located in the 700 block of Poplar Grove Street in Baltimore. According to the indictment, beginning in 2013 and continuing to the present, Poplar Grove customers presented Nwoga with prescriptions that were patently fraudulent. Nwoga filled the prescriptions and dispensed controlled dangerous substances, including Oxycodone, alprazolam clonazepam and promethazine to customers, knowing that the prescriptions were fraudulent. It is alleged that Nwoga took cash, sometimes as much as \$350, from customers in exchange for filling some of the fraudulent prescriptions. For other fraudulent prescriptions, Nwoga submitted claims for payment and reimbursement to Medicaid and other health benefit programs.

Co-conspirator Darnella Carter, 48, of Norfolk Avenue in Baltimore is charged with presenting fraudulent prescriptions to Nwoga, sometimes filled out with Nwoga's assistance. Carter would then sell the drugs to others.

"Abuse of prescription drugs is an epidemic across the country and lives are being lost every day," said Attorney General Frosh. "My office is fighting to reduce the unlawful distribution of prescription drugs, whether sold over a pharmacist's counter or on a street corner."

Medicaid is a healthcare program for families, children and certain other individuals who qualify for participation based on income level, disability and other circumstances. Defrauding a State Health Plan and obtaining a benefit by fraud are both felonies, punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a \$100,000 fine. Theft is a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine. Each distribution count is a felony, punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a \$15,000 fine. A criminal indictment is

merely an accusation of wrongdoing and all persons charged with a crime are presumed innocent, unless and until the State proves the individual guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Attorney General Frosh thanked Medicaid Fraud Control Unit Assistant Attorneys General Catherine Schuster Pascale and Tracee Orlove Fruman, Sr. Investigator Shannon Beatty and Auditor Todd Sheffer for their work on the case. Attorney General Frosh also thanked the Department of Health's Office of Controlled Substances Administration, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office for their work on this case.